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Southeast Conference
UNITED CHURCH of CHRIST
TRANSFORMING CHURCHES, TRANSFORMING LIVES

(as of December 8, 2015)
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Jottings from June: December 2015

As the year comes to a close and I reflect on the almost two years of ministry with you, I find myself reminded of the theme of the General Synod this past summer, Unexpected Places. There has been much that has been unexpected here in this ministry among you.

I certainly did not expect to be moving our offices to a new location. The hours spent in meetings with building management and prospective buyers and brokers were not on the calendar. The hours spent on looking for new space and lease negotiations and attorney review of documents and packing and moving were not on the calendar.

The financial condition of the Conference was to be expected. But the necessity to act to protect our fiduciary interests in several ways including investment accounts, retaining a new accounting firm, and the need for a balanced budget as well as the budget preparation process were a bit unexpected. And the attention to this will need to continue.

I had hoped to engage the Conference and leadership in a visioning and strategic planning process but the necessity to do board development and repair and restore and strengthen relationships required a depth of presence I had not expected. And that work will continue as I seek to equip this Conference and its leaders and congregations to live into the future that God envisions for this ministry.

I did not expect the wonderful opportunity to be present as a leader as we celebrate 50 years as a UCC Conference. And the stories and people I have encountered have been rich and moving and occasions for grieving and joyous thanksgiving.

All families, even church families have their crises, but I did not expect the extent to which I would be asked to help with pastoral transitions and congregational conflict. The flip side of this is the unexpected number of persons in this Conference who are seeking to follow the call of God. I think we probably have more members per capita in some process toward authorized ministry than any other conference in the UCC.

I do not regret any of these unexpected situations. Indeed they have afforded me the opportunity to get to know people and places and ministries in a way that has been most gratifying and has deepened my appreciation for the strength of faith and character and perseverance present in this Conference.

Music often defines my thoughts when I am engaged in reflection. Here are a couple of verses of a song that has been running through my head these days.

> *Many times I've been alone and many times I've cried.*
> *Anyway you'll never know the many ways I've tried.*
> *The long and winding road that leads to your door*
> *will never disappear; I've seen that road before.*
> *It always leads me here, lead me to your door.*

Scripture reminds us that if we knock, the door will be opened and if we ask, we will receive. I hope that you know that my door is open and I welcome your questions and sharing of your needs as we, together, minister in this place, in this time, among God's people. Many blessings in this season of anticipation and waiting for an unexpected miracle to change our lives.

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